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SHAPIRA'S SUICIDE.

The Forger of an Ancient Manuscript of the Pentateuch Ends His Own Life.

Rotterdam, March 11th.—Solomon Shapira, who recently attempted to sell in England a forged manuscript of the Books of the Pentateuch, killed himself in a hotel here. He had not left his room for several days. The police forced the door and found the blood-bespattered corpse upon the bed. Letters showed he was suffering from mental aberration.

[The London literary and scientific world was deeply interested two years ago in the discovery of M. W. Shapira, an antiquarian and bookseller of Jerusalem, of a valuable and ancient manuscript, containing an older and a different version of the Ten Commandments from that now accepted. His statement of how the manuscript came into his possession was exceedingly vague and ingeniously unspecific. After it had been deposited in the British Museum with the price fixed at £1,000,000, Mr. Shapira wrote to Dr. Ginsburg, the eminent English scholar, in which he gave an account of how he secured these presumably precious fragments of deuteronomy. They came into his hands, he says, in 1878, through the Sheikh Mahmud Orakat, the well-known chief of the guides from Jerusalem to the Jordan, who found them in caves hewn high up in a rock about an hour east of Aroar, near the Modjib. They found there several bundles of old black linen. They peeled away the linen, and behold! instead of gold which they expected to find, there were some black inscribed strips of leather called Nekesh, which means some signs or scratches. These were manuscript.

Professor T. H. Hall, of Philadelphia, one of the most erudite of Oriental scholars in America, knew Shapira personally, having formed his acquaintance in Jerusalem in 1876. "Mr. Shapira," said Professor Hall, "was a converted Jew and a member of the Protestant Episcopal Church. He first became known to America shortly after the discovery of the Moabite stone in 1868. He kept a small shop in Jerusalem and dealt in all kinds of antiquities and curiosities, and being a keen, intelligent fellow, managed to pick up a great deal of knowledge concerning ancient inscriptions. Some time between 1869 and 1873 he sold to two Americans several squeezes of pretended Moabite inscriptions. A squeeze is a paper fac simile of the lettering on a stone made by pressing the paper while damp over the object. Lithographs of these squeezes were distributed to Oriental scholars, who detected the forgery almost at a glance. Shapira had used styles of Phœnician letter, of different ages, and the inscriptions, when translated, were a mass of nonsense. The cheat was a very clumsy one. The next attempt, a few years later, was with another lot of sham squeezes, of which a specimen lot are now in the Berlin Museum. Many German scholars were deceived by these forgeries. Clermont Ganneau, the savant who first put together the fragments of the Moabite stone, succeeded in getting into Shapira's factory not long after this, and satisfied himself that the business of the manufacture of fraudulent antiquities was carried on extensively." The Books of the Pentateuch were declared forgeries.]

OLD ENGLISH PASTIMES.

It is pleasant to know that a few of the old Maypoles remain: "one still support: a weathercock in the churchyard at Pendleton, Manchester; and in Derbyshire," a few years ago, several were to be seen standing on some of the village greens." Around them, adorned with St. George's banner and the white, forked pennon, ranged the ancient morris-dance of Boarlet, Maid Marian, and Little John; and near by were played the comic interludes that furnished "more matter for a May morning." The revolving months brought frequent festivals, each with its special character: now there was drinking of the Whitsun ale, sold by the churchwardens to repair the church; and now the "booting" and cock-cart of the harvest home furnished more amusement to the young; Midsummer Eve and Hallowmas, and above all Christmas, with their questioning maids, their soul-cakes, their gill-nut-mega and wassail candle; and many, many more there were that make our own holidays seem starvelings by comparison. Births, christenings, marriages, deaths, and burials, now too generally only matters of record, were solemn and, even in the case of the last two, happy occasions. But all this is become, so to speak, an old wives' tale. Briefly, by merely glancing here and there in the last two hundred pages, one is sure to come upon some "rite of May" that he would have been glad "to do some observance" to. Cakes and ale we have, and ginger is hot in the mouth; but how many a pretty extravagance has gone by that once made Britannia's Pastors something more genuine than an elaborated suggestion from Theocritus! Colin Clout is a homely name, and Autolycus is a pleasant one, but both "suffer not thinking on with the hobby-horse, whose epitaph is,—

"For oh, for oh, the hobby-horse is forgot."
Would that Colin might again come to court, say we; even at the risk of not escaping a peevish as easily as he was wont!—March Atlantic.

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A Secret Agent at Work.

We were surprised the other day to learn that certain individuals in this city, who had for many years yielded to what was apparently an inevitable fate, were startled from their torpid condition of semi-stupidity, into asserting their right to "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness." These parties had been bound by an influence as powerful as it was incomprehensible. They knew not the cause, yet they were victims to the result. They were enchained, but they could not discern by what means they had been manacled. They had long sought deliverance in vain. Their appeals to science and to knowledge contained in books were equally unavailing. At last, relief came. It was not through any action of the President, or of Congress, for their trouble was not of a political character. Neither did the Governor's message relieve them, nor any action of the new Legislature, for it was out of their power and foreign to their jurisdiction. Yet they were suddenly and effectually released from the bondage they suffered, and placed on the equal scale of human happiness. "What was their trouble?" is what our readers will ask. They had been rendered helpless by that universal enemy—rheumatism. They had not walked or even moved without pain for years, and on the strong recommendations of friends "who had been there," they tried Britania, and were at once relieved and radically cured. Britania is what did it. It acted like a magic power. This secret agent quietly coursed through their veins, removed the cause of the trouble, liberated the captives from their doomed condition, and now they congratulate each other on the accomplishment of such a triumph, and the acquisition of the knowledge, by which they can at any time resist the encroachments of their common foe. We could give the names of the parties, but will wait a future time.

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